

**BEECH GROVE CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE 2015 BUDGET &
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8th, 2014**

Mayor Dennis Buckley opened the Public Hearing/Special Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: City Council Members, Dave Mobley, Dave Harrison, Ed Bell, and Anthony Davidson. Absent were Council Members, John Jennings, Kathy Coates, and Mary Stewart. Also present were Mayor, Dennis Buckley, Clerk Treasurer, Dan McMillan, and City Attorney, Craig Wiley.

All joined in the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS:

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Approval of minutes will be held until the October 6th meeting.

PUBLIC HEARING – 2015 BUDGET

Ted Pierson, Beech Grove – Mr. Pierson spoke regarding the progress made in Beech Grove since he moved here in 1923. He appreciates what the Council is doing and supports the budget 100%. He likes seeing the improvement in wages for City employees. He said that transportation is very important for the activities at the Senior Center. The staff picks up many people who would not be able to come down to the Senior Center if transportation were not offered. They also help seniors by providing transportation for errands such as going to the grocery. He appreciates the 2015 budget that has funds allotted for the Senior Center transportation.

Christine Vuskalns, Beech Grove – Ms. Vuskalns spoke regarding the General Ordinance #3, 2014 regarding animals that was approved at the August 4th Council meeting and subsequently signed by Mayor Buckley. This ordinance places a prohibition on poultry within Beech Grove city limits and imposes a fine for violations. She mentioned that Councilor John Jennings twice made a commitment to make an amendment to the ordinance to allow poultry ownership within city limits subject to certain limitations. She believes that he made this commitment, realizing that not all properties in Beech Grove are equal. Ms. Vuskalns stated that the two 5-acre lots on Adelaide Street where she lives are not the same as a lot on Main Street. Her family has owned poultry for 4 years and has made substantial donations to food pantries and also given eggs to friends who have financial difficulties as well. By speaking tonight, she wants Councilor Jennings' statements to become part of the public record. She also wants to ask Councilor Jennings when he plans to propose the amendment to this ordinance. Since Councilor Jennings is not in attendance tonight, Ms. Vuskalns will be present at the next meeting to make the same statement. Mayor Buckley stated that tonight's meeting is strictly budget-related, so he asked Ms. Vuskalns to please bring this up again at the next Council meeting on October 6th.

Mayor Buckley closed the Public Hearing.

NEW BUSINESS:

BEECH GROVE PUBLIC LIBRARY BUDGET

General Ordinance #17, 2014 - 2015 Library Budget - 1st Reading Only

Clerk Treasurer McMillan read the ordinance in its entirety into the record.

Library Director Elizabeth Schoettle spoke regarding the library budget. The operating fund has increased by about 10% over the 2014 budget, but the overall budget has only increased by 5%. This is because the library is not appropriating anything for the Library Reserve Fund, which is a type of savings account for libraries rather than being supported by taxes. The largest increases are in capital outlays, such as equipment and furniture. The library needs new computers, needs to convert the online catalog, and needs an updated website. There are also some additional funds for books and non-print materials. The budget also plans for small raises for the Adult Librarian, Children's Librarian, and the Circulation Supervisor, in addition to an overall increase in wages for all employees, which hopefully will fund some additional library hours in 2015.

Councilor Mobley asked how many hourly employees work at the library, and Ms. Schoettle replied that it varies between 6 and 7 employees; right now there are 6 employees, which is fewer than when she began as Director. Councilor Mobley stated that he thought the Library Director did a really good job in putting this budget together.

Clerk Treasurer McMillan read another paragraph of the ordinance into the record.

Councilor Mobley moved to approve the ordinance on 1st reading only. Councilor Harrison seconded the Motion; which was approved by unanimous voice vote. General Ordinance #17, 2014 will be heard on 2nd and 3rd reading at the October 6th meeting.

General Ordinance #20, 2014 - 2015 Salary Ordinance - 1st Reading Only

Clerk Treasurer McMillan read the ordinance in its entirety into the record.

Mayor Buckley pointed out that this ordinance calls for a 2% cost of living adjustment for full-time employees. It also changes the format on how DPW pays their employees as far as the step program, which would be very similar to police and fire. It also calls for a part-time court clerk to supplement the Court because of how busy they are, and a \$2.00 meal allowance for the fire department. Mayor Buckley confirmed with financial advisor Jeff Peters that the 2015 budget can afford to pay for these salary increases. Peters stated that these increases fit with the 2015 revenue estimates. The fiscal plan that the City has worked out accounts for a 2 ½% increase moving forward, so there doesn't appear to be a problem with the sustainability of the budget moving forward.

Clerk Treasurer McMillan read a correction to the Council members' pay into the record.

Councilor Davidson moved that all elected officials' (Mayor, Clerk-Treasurer, Board of Sanitation, City Council, and City Court Judge) salaries remain at their current 2014 salary levels.

General Ordinance #21, 2014 - 2015 City Budget - 1st Reading Only

Clerk Treasurer McMillan read the ordinance in its entirety into the record.

Financial advisor Jeff Peters gave a brief financial overview. He has analyzed the proposed spending for the 2015 budget and looked at the actual revenues for the first half of 2014 and the estimated revenues for 2015. These were evaluated against the City's fiscal plan and he believes that the proposed 2015 expenditures are within the anticipated revenues for 2015. The proposed budget is expected to be balanced to revenue and sustainable going forward. He pointed out that Marion County is considering an increase to the public safety LOIT rate. A rate increase of that nature would yield additional money to the City, and no revenue increase has been considered for this budget or the fiscal plan. If this does happen, there will need to be discussions about the additional revenue and its uses. For 2015, the Marion County Auditor's Office has produced an estimate of assessed value, which is an increase of approximately 10.7%. It looks as if the City is starting to turn the corner in regards to assessed values going up. If the DLGF accepts and certifies the assessed value, we would anticipate the tax rate to drop by about \$0.09, from \$1.59 to approximately \$1.50. This is great news for the City to see an increase in services and a reduction in their tax rate.

Senior Center Director Carla Marchbanks explained the budget for the Senior Center. The Senior Center is asking for 2 new vehicles, while the rest of the budget is very self-explanatory. She feels that the vehicles are unsafe, oftentimes the doors on the bus won't open, the back air conditioning unit isn't working, and the air conditioning in the car isn't working. This is dangerous considering that they are transporting people who already have breathing problems, respiratory conditions and heart conditions. Councilor Mobley asked about the age of the vehicles. She responded that the car is a 2007 model with approximately 57,000 miles on it. She also stated that there is more wrong with the car than just the air conditioning. Councilor Mobley requested a list of the problems with both the car and bus. The bus is 10 years old and has been taken to Brown's, AutoDoc, and the dealership for repairs, and it just seems to be a money pit. It does need new tires which are expensive, and the budget is tight. Mayor Buckley questioned the safety of the bus as well. Ms. Marchbanks confirmed that they are required to have a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) to operate the bus. In response to Councilor Davidson, she confirmed that the Senior Center has not tried any advertising on the car or bus. They also have not looked into partnering with any senior communities in the Beech Grove area. However, some of the senior communities do pay to have events at the Senior Center. Currently, there are over 300 paying members at the Senior Center, and the Center provides transportation to doctor's appointments, hair appointments, grocery store, etc., as long as it's within the BG City limits or at the St. Francis South Campus. The majority of the members do not drive. Ted Pierson pointed out that he noticed on a recent trip on the Senior Center bus that the acceleration misses out and that it could die on them at any time.

DPW Director Brad Meriwether said that the 2015 LRS budget is pretty much the same as this year's budget, actually around \$9,000.00 less. As far as road salt, the amount you order is based on the previous winter and the price this year went up about \$7.00. This year we will be paying \$79.90 per ton for 1,200 tons, vs. 600 tons ordered last year.

We didn't increase the salt budget, Dan, I discussed it, but, we decided we should be fine, and we are at approximately \$50,000 of our \$95,000 budget amount. Because there was a FEMA situation for a snowstorm in January of this year, it looks like we will get about \$39,000 to put into that account to shore it up. We still have \$400,000.00 in paving. Clerk Treasurer McMillan mentioned that we ran out of road salt last winter because of the winter being so bad; we had to look all over to find more and paid at least \$90.00 per ton. Prior to last winter, we had plenty of salt, so Clerk Treasurer McMillan complimented Director Meriwether on his estimation and ordering of needed road salt. Road salt is hard to find in tough winters.

The total amount for the MVH budget did go up based on projected funding from \$811,779.00 last year to \$834,767.00 this year, so about a \$23,000 increase. This amount does include a hot patch machine which we will use when we go to Rieth-Riley to pick up mix; this machine will allow us to get a larger amount of mix (4-5 tons vs. 1 ton of mix) and keep it hot the entire time we use it or keep it warm overnight to use the next day. This will be a great improvement to our efficiency in patching potholes and allow us to do a better job. Most cities have one; the City of Beech Grove never has had one. This is a step up for us to shore up that part of our operation. After winters like this last one, potholes can become a major safety issue and this machine will allow us to be more efficient in using the mixture and more productive in filling the potholes. The amount we put into the budget for that machine was \$28,500.0 and was from a quote we received from an Indianapolis vendor that Indianapolis DPW buys their machines from. Compliance went up \$7,500 in this budget. Temporary help went up a little bit, and I based that expense on paying one person, \$12.00 to \$13.00 per hour, for a permanent part-time position, that would be all year and would be used for both the street and sanitation departments. The sidewalk money is still there at \$43,000. Overall, the budget didn't change much at all from last year's budget.

Police Chief Swartz thanked the committee for meeting with them. He stated that for this year's 2014 budget, the police department is out of money in certain categories and drawing from different places. We asked for a similar budget to our 2012 budget. We increased gas usage and maintenance usage because vehicles are older and we have at least 6 patrol cars that are nearing 100,000 miles and are 7-8 years old. The maintenance costs have gradually increased, and you want these pursuit vehicles to be as safe as possible. This budget asks for 4 replacement cars, which will help. The police department does not ask for money for our bullets and targets. It comes from the Continuing Education Fund, rather than being paid for by the city. The Continuing Ed income comes from traffic fines and drug enforcement use. The police department used \$100,000 from the CIF fund to run the department that is not in the budget. Mayor Buckley asked if this would bring the budget, back up to 2012.

There is about \$100,000 in the budget for new laptop computers; the chief is working with three different companies on prices for those. Because of extra costs associated with the laptops, we will probably spend all the \$100,000 and still not get everything we need. You have to look at the mounts and installation.

Judge Wells was not present to talk about the Court budget. Chief Swartz stated that he thought the part-time Court Clerk and the \$2,000 for another workstation for that extra clerk would greatly help the Court and the police department.

Since the Court Clerk is off on Mondays and works four days a week, the police department office workers deal with court issues, so the part-time person would take much of the load off the police department office.

Mayor Buckley reviewed the police budget and asked Chief Swartz if the following is correct, the police budget will see a pay increase for all full time employees of 2%, 100,000.00 for police computers, funding to lease 4 new police cars, in addition to the leases already in place for 4 new police cars that were bought this year, and your operating budget goes back up. Chief Swartz said that is correct in addition to an increase in fuel and maintenance.

Councilor Davidson asked if the police budget will have enough money in Category 1 to cover all the officers, and Chief Swartz replied that the budget will be approximately \$20,000 short in that category, which includes salaries, health benefits, etc according to his estimates, but he did speak to Clerk Treasurer McMillan and Clerk Treasurer McMillan assured him that category 1 is completely funded. Clerk Treasurer McMillan commented that he has heard the same statements made the past 2 years, but we have yet to run out of money for that category, so that is not an issue at all. Clerk Treasurer McMillan also stated that the police department budget has gone up significantly since 2012. The police department budget is almost \$3 million dollars, the category you are speaking to that was at a 2012 amount totaled \$12,000.00, so that is not significant in a budget of \$3,000,000.00 and you were given that \$12,000.00 in this years budget.

Fire Chief Cheshire stated that the 2015 budget brings both challenges and anticipation for the future. With the many changes in the health care system, we must be flexible and adapt to changes in order to keep up with industry changes in services and reimbursement. Our measurement of performance is providing the most appropriate service to the most patients as quickly as possible. Community care response will become the norm with focus on prevention and avoiding unnecessary transports to the hospital. There will be changes in contractual services concerning staffing with Emergency Medical Services. Medic 57 will become a 24-hour ALS transport truck and Medic 56 will be co-staffed for 24 hours with BGFDD civilian paramedics and St. Francis EMS. These changes will provide 2 ALS ambulances for the City. The 2015 budget includes a lease for a new ambulance. This will allow us to place the vehicles in a solid rotation and allow us to expand services in the future. Category 1 includes a 2% pay raise to the base, a \$2.00 increase to meal allowance, and certification pay to all fire department EMTs of \$750 per year. Category 2 amounts remain mostly the same. We were able to increase Garage & Motor for fuel, in anticipation of increased costs for fuel, of \$15,000, and increased Medical Supplies \$31,000. These are significant changes to help us move forward to provide the best quality EMS services we can. In Category 3 there is an increase in Personal Services, \$264,000 total, and \$164,000 from LOIT going toward Contractual Services to provide and staff our EMS services. There is \$15,000 in the budget for the ambulance lease and \$17,000 from LOIT and \$3,000 for interest on LOIT, for a total of \$35,000 toward a lease purchase. Chief Cheshire said the 2015 Budget is a good budget and will provide needed services to the citizens of Beech Grove. Mayor Buckley asked when was the last time the fire department had a raise, and Chief Cheshire responded that it was probably 6-8 years ago. He also confirmed that this will be the third ambulance to be replaced in 2 ½ years, and a fire engine was replaced last year.

Mayor Buckley reviewed the fire department budget and asked Chief Cheshire if the following is correct, the fire department will be providing 2 ambulances 24 hours a day/7 days a week, there will be a 2% pay increase for all full time City employees, a new ambulance, increase in meals, increase in EMS pay, and a increase in fuel. Mayor Buckley commented that if he had been the Fire Chief standing there he would've been very happy with the budget. Councilor Davidson fears that the fire department budget will be short in Category 1, and it is \$17,332.00 less than last year's budget. Chief Cheshire responded that Clerk Treasurer McMillan has assured him that the money is available to cover Category 1. Clerk Treasurer McMillan confirmed this statement. Mayor Buckley commented that his is the second year in a row for a pay increase for retirees. Councilor Davidson also asked to verify that this budget does not include hiring civilian medics. Chief Cheshire confirmed this, saying that he conferred with financial advisor Jeff Peters and the money to hire new medics is just not available.

Mayor Buckley thanked Councilors Harrison, Davidson, and Bell for serving on the Budget Subcommittee. Councilor Davidson thanked the department heads for their willingness to go the extra mile in getting the budget done and hopes that there will be a full Budget Committee in the future. Councilor Harrison agreed with Councilor Davidson, and said that it was an interesting learning experience to find out what all goes into a budget and about the different City departments. It was very interesting to learn everything he learned about the fire department and the city needs to plan for the future of public safety, because there are things coming up that are going to be very costly. He looked at websites and at other fire departments, and he was surprised to see how many other cities our size or smaller have more fire trucks, and he really thinks we need more fire trucks. Councilor Harrison commented when he first started on Board of Works he can remember how the city spent \$45,000 on repairs of a fire truck. He also commented that the City is blessed to have Jeff Peters. Clerk Treasurer McMillan commented that this budget is an increase of almost \$817,000. When you try to spread that around to the different departments, not everybody gets everything that they would like to have. With the exception of the Senior Center, every department has upgraded equipment and is in fairly good shape. He is happy to be able to get new equipment and raises for the City employees.

Councilor Davidson proposed an amendment to the ordinance. In regards to the Senior Center, he moved to take out the new car, the principal payment on bus lease, and interest payment for a total of \$36,000. He would like to insert \$1,000 for Repairs and Maintenance into the budget. He would like to add \$15,000 to the police department Category, Salaries, and adding \$20,000 to the fire department Category 1, Salaries, as well. Councilor Mobley seconded the Motion; Clerk Treasurer McMillan commented that both budget Category 1 for police and fire are fully funded, so there is no need for it. The vote was 3-2 with Councilors Bell and Harrison voting no and Mayor Buckley also voted no to break the tie; the Motion failed.

Councilor Harrison moved to approve the ordinance on 1st reading only. Councilor Bell seconded the Motion; the vote was 2-2 with Councilors Davidson and Mobley voting no. Mayor Buckley voted yes to break the tie at 3-2 and the Motion passed. General Ordinance #21, 2014 will be heard on 2nd and 3rd reading at the October 6th meeting.

COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Councilor Dave Mobley – None.

Councilor Dave Harrison – Councilor Harrison believes that this is a good budget. As far as the elected officials, he wanted to make clear that he did vote for elected officials to get raises, but that was not so that the Council members would get raises. He agrees that any city needs to pay its elected officials a decent wage or you won't get good elected officials in office.

Councilor Anthony Davidson – Councilor Davidson apologized for being absent from the September 2nd Council meeting. He thanked Councilors Bell and Harrison for participating with him in the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge. They challenged both the Lawrence and Southport councils to take the challenge, and the Southport council has completed it.

Councilor Ed Bell –None.

ADJOURNMENT:

Councilor Harrison moved to adjourn. Councilor Mobley seconded the Motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

The next meeting will be October 6, 2014 at 7:00 pm in Council Chambers at City Hall.

Dennis Buckley, Mayor

Dan McMillan, Clerk–Treasurer

Minutes prepared by: Mary Duffer
Edited by: Clerk Treasurer Dan McMillan